

Remarks

Claims 1-39 remain pending in the present application. Claims 1, 17 and 24 are independent claims.

Advisory Action

In the Advisory Action dated Feb. 2, 2005, the Examiner states that there are differences between the current invention and Toda, but the claim language does not seem to recite or emphasize these distinctions. To expedite prosecution only without acquiescing to these assertions, accordingly the claims have been amended to emphasize these distinctions. For instance, a "digitized document" pointed out by the Examiner has been changed to a --digital document data file--. Further, the passive role of the management unit and the active role of scanners of the present invention have been more clearly claimed to emphasize the distinctions over Toda. In this regard, among other things, the term "an autonomous acceptance" has been used in certain claims.

35 U.S.C. 102(e) Rejection

Claims 1-39 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Toda (U.S. Patent No. 6,256,107). This rejection, insofar as it pertains to the presently pending claims, is respectfully traversed.

Regarding independent claims 1, 17 and 24, Toda is directed to a system of interconnected digital copying machines in which the printing of copies may be

distributed over several copying machines. In this regard, a user may choose the job distributing option so that a large copy job can be distributed over multiple copying machines, e.g., to expedite the copying process. In this case, the current copying machine (where the user is) checks the other machines to find out which of them can be allocated a part of the printing in accordance with the copy process settings made by the user. Then the current copying machine (allocating machine) asks every selected machine if it is available for allocation. The interrogated machines can answer if they are indeed available. Then the print part of the copy job can be automatically distributed over the selected and available machines or a subset thereof.

Although Toda may disclose some communication between an allocating device and an accepting device, the nature of the communication and the communicating devices is patentably distinct from Applicants' claimed invention since its purpose and the implementation details are patentably distinct.

For example, Applicants' claimed invention is directed to a plurality of scanners and a request for a digital document data file. In contrast, Toda involves copying machines/printers. Although Toda discloses a scanner unit, the use of the scanner unit is peripheral and Toda's distribution of a job to other copying machines involves a copy job and not a request for a digital document data file for the scanners.

Furthermore, Toda distributes a copy job to multiple copying machines whereas Applicants' invention allocates a request for a digital document data file (one complete job) to the scanner that accepts the request (single device).

Moreover, in Toda, the allocating device has an active role in that it selects the devices for doing the sub-jobs. In contrast, in Applicants' invention, the allocating device (management unit) has a passive role in that it communicates the request for a digital document data file to the plurality of scanners and waits to receive from any one of the scanners an (autonomous) acceptance of the request to allocate the request to the accepting scanner.

Clearly, any one of these features as set forth in independent claims 1, 17 and 24 is neither taught nor suggested by Toda. Accordingly, the invention as set forth in independent claims 1, 17 and 24 and their dependent claims (due to their dependency) is patentable over Toda and thus the rejection must be withdrawn.

Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons and in view of the above clarifying amendments, the Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw all of the objections and rejections of record, and an early issuance of a Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.

The Examiner is respectfully requested to enter this Amendment After Final Rejection, in that it raises no new issues but merely places the claims in a form more clearly patentable over the references of record. In the alternative, the Examiner is respectfully requested to enter this Amendment After Final Rejection in that it reduces the issues for appeal.

Should there be any matters which need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Esther H. Chong (Registration No. 40,953) at the telephone number of the undersigned below.

Applicant(s) respectfully petitions under the provisions of 37 C.F.R. § 1.136(a) and 1.17 for a two-month extension of time in which to respond to the Examiner's Office Action. **The fee in the amount of \$450.00 has been paid in connection with the proper filing of this Notice of Appeal.**

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17; particularly, extension of time use.

Respectfully submitted,

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